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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SCE: PFEUFFER, BRANDON, BELL, ENAV

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TAGS: [AMGT](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: O/I DAVIES Q KUNEVA TALKING POINTS

Classified by Jeff Levine for reasons 1.4 B & D

11. (C) The following text is sent as an O/I to EUR/SCE because Embassy Sofia's classified e-mail system is not working.

DAS Glyn Davies meeting with
Bulgarian Minister for European Affairs Meglena Kuneva on Jan 24

CONTEXT

Bulgaria's next step in the process towards EU accession (planned for January 2007) is to sign the Accession Treaty on April 25th in Luxembourg. Bulgaria has harmonized around 90% of its laws with EU directives and regulations. Minister Kuneva has been the driving force behind Bulgaria's preparation for accession Q and seems to be a major leader in pushing for reforms in the civic and economic environment. She will likely brief you on their EU progress and thank the US for its support of Bulgaria in this process, and encourage cooperation and renewed strength in the transatlantic relationship.

The Minister will welcome your praise of Bulgaria's efforts so far, as well as your appreciation for their participation in fighting the war on terror, and sending troops to Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Especially with regard to Iraq her Government needs to be perceived by its people as a partner with whom the U.S. consults and listens.

On Iraq, Bulgarian officials - though unflagging in their support of the U.S. - have become increasingly direct about their concerns of political vulnerability in this year's parliamentary elections. They need to show their electorate the tangible benefits of close cooperation with the United States. Embassy Sofia has urged Washington to consider concrete ways to show U.S. support. "Delivering" on issues frequently raised by the Bulgarians, however, will prove challenging (e.g., POTUS meeting, Iraqi debt collection, visa waivers, Iraqi reconstruction contracts).

ISSUES TO RAISE

Iraq losses: Appreciate Government's resolve and the sacrifices of the Bulgarian people to help bring peace and stability to Iraq. Battalion has performed well under incredibly tough circumstances. Condolences for loss of Bulgarian soldiers. December 2004 marked the first anniversary of the deaths of five Bulgarian soldiers in Karbala. Two more were killed, the latest one on October 24. In November, Bulgaria sent its fourth contingent of 480 soldiers. Unwavering in its support, the Government has so far resisted opposition calls for troop removal following January's Iraqi elections, though Iraq is emerging as a key issue before next summer's parliamentary elections.

Staying the course in Iraq: Encourage Bulgaria to keep the course in Iraq even after this January's elections. Bulgaria is an important partner to the U.S. in maintaining security in Iraq. Early withdrawal will weaken security in Iraq exactly when the MNF is needed most. The opposition Socialists have become increasingly vocal in their calls for Bulgaria to remove all of its troops in Iraq after the January elections. The government has publicly stated that Bulgaria will reconsider its role in Iraq after the elections and will announce in February their decision.

EU Accession: Congratulations on your preparations for EU Accession. USG recognizes the progress Bulgaria has made in the past few years under the leadership of you and the Prime Minister. We hope those efforts continue Q particularly in areas such as Rule of Law and protection of Intellectual Property Rights. We also hope that Bulgaria acts to ensure that there is no discrimination against non-EU investors. Bulgaria has made great strides in closing their chapters for accession and has harmonized approximately 90% of EU directives. However, Bulgaria has slipped backward in its enforcement of IPR violations. US investors are disadvantaged in a few areas: a proposed amendment to the constitution gives favorable treatment to EU citizens/companies in the purchase of land; and tariff rates for American Whiskey are greater than for Scottish Whiskey.

Bulgarian medics in Libya: Remain fully engaged with the Libyans about the case; U.S. working for immediate release and will continue to make this a priority topic on agenda with Tripoli. Libya's continued designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism means we still have a good deal of leverage. Support EU effort to craft a humanitarian response and have facilitated the participation of American pediatric AIDS experts in that effort. Five Bulgarian medics have been under a death sentence since May,

convicted of intentionally infecting hundreds of Libyan children. The Bulgarians remain concerned that lifting U.S. and EU sanctions reduces crucial leverage over the Libyan government. EU-Libya negotiations on addressing the HIV problem could provide an element in an agreement securing their release. Libya needs a face-saving settlement it can sell to the families as compensation consistent with Shar'ia law, while the Bulgarians chafe at the concept of compensation because it implies culpability on the medics' part. We have facilitated a visit to Benghazi by the University of Baylor Pediatric AIDS Initiative in coordination with the EU effort.

If asked:

Basing: Reassure Military and Civilian officials that the U.S. is working on a decision on using military facilities in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Government and the general population are eager to land a permanent U.S. base(s). There is growing impatience among Bulgarian leaders with accommodating numerous visits to Bulgarian military sites without any serious revelations of U.S. base transformation plans. The government will be expecting and looking for signals that a final decision is close at hand.

Iraq Reconstruction Contracts: Pledge to continue to work with the GOB to assist its attempts to land Iraqi reconstruction contracts for Bulgarian defense firms. Emphasize the importance of restoring Bulgarian non-military representation in Baghdad as a means to further its interests there. Bulgarian political leaders are aggressively looking for concrete benefits from their military participation in Iraq. There are signs of increasing Bulgarian frustration over their inability to win any substantial contracts for Iraq. We have encouraged the Bulgarians to take advantage of their commercial competitiveness, especially in the defense sector, while simultaneously cautioning them that Bulgarian firms cannot expect to be handed contracts. Bulgaria has signed contracts for roughly \$17 million in arms sales to the new Iraqi security forces, but is looking for much larger contracts.

Bio Note: Mrs. Kuneva is a graduate of Georgetown and very favorably disposed to the U.S. (bio attached)